

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, March 2, 2021

The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 1:10pm: President Biden participates in phone meeting with Senate Democrats
- 4:15pm: Biden delivers remarks on pandemic
- 6:00pm: Vice President Harris swears in Miguel Cardona as Education Secretary
- 8:15pm: Harris makes remarks to the House Democratic issues conference
- 12:30pm: Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds press briefing

CONGRESS

- U.S. House convenes at 9am
- U.S. Senate convenes at 10:30am
 - Senate to resume consideration nomination of Gina Raimondo to be Commerce secretary

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Sanders Seeks Amendment Vote on Minimum Wage:** Senate Budget Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) will force a vote on an amendment that would add the \$15 minimum wage measure back into the relief bill, he said in a statement yesterday. The measure is likely to fail because Republicans and some Democrats have said they oppose the measure, but it will serve to put members on the record on the issue.
 - Sanders also said he thinks senators should overrule the parliamentarian and eliminate the 60-vote threshold to end debate in the Senate. "My own personal view is that the Senate should ignore the parliamentarian's advice, which is wrong in a number of respects," Sanders said. "I am not sure, however, that my view at this point is the majority view in the Democratic Caucus."
 - The package's measures on pensions and COBRA health insurance have been approved by the parliamentarian, Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said in a statement yesterday.
 - Ambulance companies are seeking a major victory as Senate Democrats consider permitting Medicare to pay them as emergency responders in the field. The proposal, which may be added to the Covid-19 relief package, would empower the Department of Health and Human Services to temporarily pay ambulance providers for services they deliver to Medicare beneficiaries outside a hospital.
- **Politico: Senate Set To Take Up \$1.9T Covid Aid Bill As Soon As Wednesday:** The Senate will move forward as soon as Wednesday on President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer predicting Monday that the chamber would face "some late nights" ahead this week. Democrats are racing to pass the Covid aid package into law before March 14, when boosted federal unemployment

benefits expire. Given the evenly divided Senate, they are using a complex tool known as budget reconciliation process to pass the bill without the need to win GOP votes.

- **Stat: Trump Administration Spent Billions In Hospital Funds On Warp Speed:** The Trump administration quietly took around \$10 billion from a fund meant to help hospitals and health care providers affected by Covid-19 and used the money to bankroll Operation Warp Speed contracts, four former Trump administration officials told STAT.
- **Bloomberg Government: Drama for Biden's Budget Pick Shines Light on Deputy:** Bipartisan opposition to Biden's budget director nominee, Neera Tanden, is drawing attention to his choice for the deputy role: a little-known House staffer named Shalanda Young. Young has emerged as a strong contender for the top job at the White House Office of Management and Budget if Tanden fails to convince at least one Republican to save her nomination after Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said he would oppose her. The Senate Budget Committee will hear from Young today to evaluate her nomination as the OMB deputy.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Team Offers \$2.3 Million for ACA Enrollment Aid:** The Biden administration is making available about \$2.3 million in funding for people who assist Obamacare enrollees. The money for outreach, education, and enrollment efforts was given to 30 organizations in 28 states that help patients use federal Affordable Care Act exchanges that got funding in 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said.
- **The New York Times: High Staff Turnover at U.S. Nursing Homes Poses Risks for Residents' Care:** Extraordinarily high turnover among staffs at nursing homes likely contributed to the shocking number of deaths at the facilities during the pandemic, the authors of a new study suggested. The study, which was published Monday in Health Affairs, a health policy journal, represents a comprehensive look at the turnover rates in 15,645 nursing homes across the country, accounting for nearly all of the facilities certified by the federal government. The researchers found the average annual rate was 128 percent, with some facilities experiencing turnover that exceeded 300 percent.
- **Modern Healthcare: Rural Residents Twice As Likely To Leave Medicare Advantage As Urbanites, Study Says:** Medicare Advantage enrollees living in rural areas are more than twice as likely to switch to traditional Medicare as urban dwellers, according to a new study. Researchers from Drexel University and Brown University analyzed nearly 17,900 member responses to the annual Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey from 2010 to 2016 to find that 10.5% of rural Medicare Advantage members switched to fee-for-service Medicare, while 5% of urbanites switched from the public-private relationship to the government program. The report analyzed 11 different measures to determine beneficiaries' care satisfaction. Coauthor Sungchul Park, an assistant professor at Drexel University, said that rural members' biggest complaints were around the narrow provider networks they were allowed under the program.